

Thory Bonsey, Rector of Ecton and Warden of Ecton House, 1967 – 1973
A note by Frances Bonsey

Thory died in Australia in May 2008. I note that there is no mention of his time at Ecton on the website, and thought you might like a few comments.

Thory was invited to become rector of Ecton, and warden of Ecton House, early in 1967, and we moved there in September that year. I quote from my diary: "There were seventeen workmen in the house or grounds when we arrived, and in greater or lesser numbers, they were with us until several months after the official opening by H. R. H. the Duchess of Gloucester on May 8th 1968. The ground floor of the Rectory, together with 24 bedrooms in the new wing, constituted the House. We had a semi-flat on the first floor and in the attics. There was also a housekeeper's flat on the first floor."

I was interested to read the account of the last warden, Canon Evans, who found it very difficult facing opposition from parishioners who did not want the House to close and be sold. Thory and I faced similar opposition from parishioners who were against its opening! This was especially so when the upstairs Parish Meeting Room became the new chapel for the House. The fact that a new Meeting Room was being made from converted stables on the ground floor was not considered a fair return!

This venture by the Peterborough Diocese was a great success and became a flourishing concern. I quote from my diary again: "Many people come here, some for a day, some to stay two or three nights. The groups are varied, some specifically religious, and others secular conferences. Each group brings its own interest and feel, no two are alike. We are greeting many people and enjoying the contacts."

The success of the House was largely due to Thory's passionate enthusiasm backed up by a wonderful staff, very largely drawn from Ecton village. In March 1973 Thory became a Canon of Peterborough cathedral in recognition of his work at Ecton.

On a personal note, our three children were married during our time at Ecton. Peter and Val in March 1968 and Cathy and Bob in September 1973, and both in Ecton church by Thory. Martin and Joan were married in Australia in February 1971, and Thory was able to be with them for the wedding. Our first grandchild Adrian Bartlet Bonsey was baptized by Thory in Ecton church on Whit Sunday 1975. Peter and Val were living at 40 High Street at the time. Alistair St. John Bonsey was baptized by Cyprian Thorpe at Easter 1974.

With all good wishes

Frances Bonsey